

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 2403

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP PFOR US EG SY

SUBJECT: CODEL BYRD'S CALL ON MARSHAL ISMAIL

1. MINWAR ISMAIL RECEIVED SENATOR BYRD APRIL 18. CHIEF OF STAFF GAMASY, MINISTER'S AIDE GENERAL MA'MUN, PEOPLES ASSEMBLY OFFICIAL MUSTAFA AND EMBOFF WERE PRESENT. AFTER EXCHANGE OF REMARKS CONCERNING US-ARAB RELATIONS AND ARAB SITUATION, IN WHICH MARSHAL RESPONDED IN ALMOST EXACT PHRASES HE USED IN HIS SPEECH TWO DAYS AGO, SENATOR POSED SEVERAL QUESTIONS.

2. THE SENATOR ASKED THE MARSHAL FOR GOE'S VIEW OF DIEGO GARCIA. EGYPTIANS WERE NONPLUSSED, AND HAD OBVIOUSLY NOT CONSIDERED MATTER. WHEN LOCATION OF ISLAND WAS POINTED OUT TO HIM, MARSHAL ISMAIL EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT HE COULD SEE NO REASON FOR EGYPT TO OBJECT, ADDING THAT FACILITY SHOULD BE OF CONSIDERABLE USE TO US.

3. AFTER MARSHAL HAD INFORMED SENATOR THAT HE IS SUPREME COMMANDER OF SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN FORCES, SENATOR ASKED IF THERE ARE ANY EGYPTIAN FORCES IN SYRIA. MARSHAL ISMAIL SAID THERE WERE EGYPTIAN PILOTS AND A LIAISON TEAM "JUST TO KEEP US IN THE PICTURE". THERE IS ALSO A SYRIAN LIAISON TEAM IN EGYPT.

4. GENERAL MA'MUN TOLD THE MARSHAL THAT THE SENATOR HAD
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INQUIRED ABOUT MERSA MATRUH. IS IT A RUSSIAN BASE? THE

MARSHAL REPLIED "ABSOLUTELY NOT". GAMASY PUT IN THAT "THERE IS NOT A SINGLE SOVIET -- CIVILIAN OR MILITARY -- IN THE ENTIRE ZONE". THE MARSHAL ADDED THAT THE GOE IS DEVELOPING MERSA MATRUH FOR ITS OWN USE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO ALEXANDRIA. SOVIETS HAVE REFUELING AND REVICTUALING "RIGHTS" THERE AS IN SEVERAL OTHER EGYPTIAN PORTS, BUT EACH RUSSIAN VISIT REQUIRES PRIOR APPROVAL.

5. ON CANAL CLEARANCE, MARSHAL SAID US OPERATION IS WELL ORGANIZED AND MOVING ALONG WELL. BRITISH TOO ARE COOPERATING EFFICIENTLY. AND THE FRENCH...GAMASY REMARKED THEY ARE TRYING HARD TO GET IN BUT CLAIMED THEY ARE TOO LATE. BUT, HE ADDED, DON'T FORGET THE SOVIETS. EMBOFF SAID WHAT ABOUT THE SOVIETS? GAMASY SMILED AND SAID THEY ARE NOT INVOLVED.

6. COMMENT: SENATOR HAD SPENT MOST OF DAY WITH GENERAL MA'MUN ON TOUR OF SUEZ, PORT TAWFIQ, AND BATTLEFIELDS EAST OF CANAL. THIRD ARMY COMMANDER BADAWI INVITED HIM TO LUNCH AT HIS HQ WHERE CODEL HAD OPPORTUNITY FOR WIDERANGING DISCUSSION WITH BADAWI AND HIS STAFF. CALL ON MINWAR SERVED AS OPPORTUNITY BOTH FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND FOR EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE FOR INDEPTH MILITARY BRIEFINGS WHICH MINISTRY HAD SCHEDULED FOR CODEL.
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